



Amendment to the Claims:

1. (currently amended): A process to intentionally degrade original digital data comprising: steps of:
- searching the original digital data for detection criteria; and
- after locating detection criteria, adjusting at least one neighboring point associated with the detection criteria, wherein the original digital data is degraded in quality by said adjusting, step; but the original digital data is recoverable from the intentionally degraded digital data.
2. (previously presented): The process of claim 1 in which the detection criteria comprises a pseudo-random sequence.
3. (previously presented): The process of claim 1 in which the adjustment of the at least one neighboring point involves a pseudo-random sequence.
4. (previously presented): The process in claim 1 in which the detection criteria includes a threshold crossing.
- 5 - 15 (canceled).

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~~16.~~ (previously presented): An apparatus comprising:

a logic processor; and

a storage unit comprising means for analyzing digital content, wherein the digital content has been transformed with a self-synchronizing degradation from an original state of the digital content, and means for recovering the original state of the digital content from the self-synchronized degraded digital content.

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17 - 20. (canceled)

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~~21.~~ (currently amended): A method of restoring degraded digital content, wherein the degraded digital content comprises degradation from an original state of the digital content, said method comprising:

analyzing the degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria, wherein for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points; and

for each group of neighboring points, adjusting each member of a group of neighboring points according to a predetermined process, wherein the predetermined process corresponds with a process used to degrade the digital content from the original state, and wherein said adjusting step helps to restore the degraded digital content to the original state.

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~~22.~~ (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the group comprises at least one neighboring point.

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~~23~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the plurality of detection criteria comprises a pseudo-random sequence.

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~~24~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the plurality of detection criteria includes a threshold crossing.

¹⁰
~~25~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the predetermined process is an inverse of the process used to degrade the digital content from the original state.

¹¹
~~26~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the digital content comprises audio content.

¹²
~~27~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the digital content comprises video content.

¹³
~~28~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the digital content comprises image content.

¹⁴
~~29~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ~~21~~⁶, wherein the degraded digital content is intentionally degraded in a manner which does not convey information.

¹⁵
~~30~~. (currently amended): A method of restoring intentionally degraded digital content, wherein the intentionally degraded digital content comprises intentional degradation from an original state of the digital content, said method comprising:

analyzing the intentionally degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria; and

for each of the plurality of detection criteria, adjusting the intentionally degraded digital content according to a predetermined process, wherein the predetermined process corresponds with a process used to intentionally degrade the digital content from the original state, and wherein said adjusting step restores the intentionally degraded digital content to the original state.

31. (canceled).

¹⁶
~~32~~. (currently amended): The method of claim ¹⁵~~30~~, wherein for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points, wherein said adjusting step comprises for each group adjusting each member of the group of neighboring points.

¹⁷
~~33~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ¹⁵~~30~~, wherein the digital content comprises audio.

¹⁸
~~34~~. (previously presented): The method of claim ¹⁵~~30~~, wherein the digital content comprises video.

¹⁹/~~35~~ (previously presented): The method of claim ⁵/~~16~~, wherein said means for recovering the original state of the digital content comprises means for analyzing the degraded digital content to identify a plurality of detection criteria, and means for adjusting for each of the detection criteria the degraded digital content according to a predetermined process.

²⁰/~~36~~ (previously presented): The method of claim ¹⁹/~~35~~, wherein the predetermined process corresponds with a process used to degrade the digital content from the original state.

²¹/~~37~~ (previously presented): The method of claim ²⁰/~~36~~, and wherein said adjusting means helps to restore the degraded digital content to the original state.

²²/~~38~~ (previously presented): The method of claim ¹⁹/~~35~~, wherein for each of the plurality of detection criteria there exists in the degraded digital content a group of neighboring points, wherein said adjusting means adjusts, for each group, each member of the group of neighboring points.

²³/~~39~~ (previously presented): The method of claim ⁵/~~16~~ wherein the self-synchronizing degradation comprises intentional degradation.

²⁴
40. (currently amended): An audio player for playing back an audio signal distributed through a network, which comprises:

~~playback means for playing back the audio signal; and~~

removing means for removing degradation data from an audio signal embedded with data using a specific key, said degradation data being at a signal level which is audible to the human sense of hearing; and

playback means for playing back an audio signal.

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41. (previously presented): The player of claim ²⁴40 wherein the degradation data includes embedded data.

²⁶
42. (previously presented): An audio distribution system including a distribution apparatus for distributing an audio signal through a network and an audio player for playing back said distributed audio signal, wherein said distribution apparatus comprises embedding means for embedding in said audio signal degradation data of which a signal level is audible to the human sense of hearing when the audio signal is played back; and wherein said audio player comprises removing means for removing degradation data from said embedded audio signal using a specific key.

²⁷
43. (previously presented): An audio distribution method wherein a sending side process an audio signal for distribution through a network and a receiving side plays back said audio signal, which comprises: embedding degradation data in said audio signal at the sending side, said degradation data having a signal level that is audible to the human sense of hearing when the audio signal is played back; and removing degradation data from said embedded audio signal using a specific key at playback.